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JUL 28 1995

Agriculture
in the
Classroom

The Agriculture
Newsletter for
Teachers

Spring 1995

All's Fair in Stettler!

Agriculture Fair draws 5,000 entries

By Barbara Duckworth
Western Producer staff

STETTLER, Alta. - For those seeking the truth about the three little pigs or about what really happens to an egg or how fast plants grow, a visit to this year's Agriculture Ambassador Fair might hold the answer.

In its fifth year, the fair encourages schools to entice children to explore agriculture research projects beyond the standard curriculums. Possible projects include discussions of global food issues, agricultural history or a demonstration of food production using live plants or animals.

This year's fair drew more than 5,000 entries from urban and rural children.

"In two counties that I know of they're doing the ag fair instead of the science fair because they see that it goes over more of the curriculum," said Betty Gabert, co-ordinator of Alberta's agriculture in the classroom program and agriculture school ambassadors.

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The Ag. Ambassador Fair was not the only Ag. School Fair this year! Rosary School in Manning held a terrific fair as did the Stettler Elementary School. Please read the letter to Ag. in the Classroom from Sherry Dechant.

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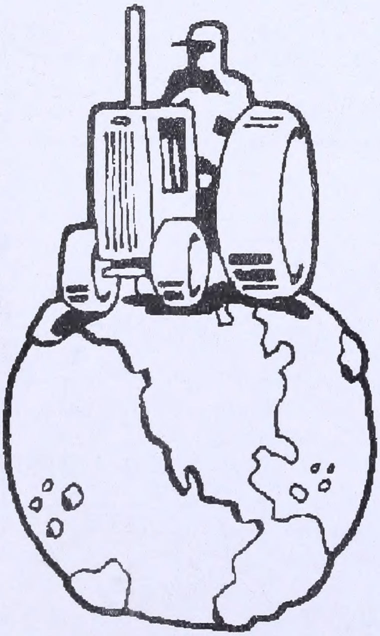
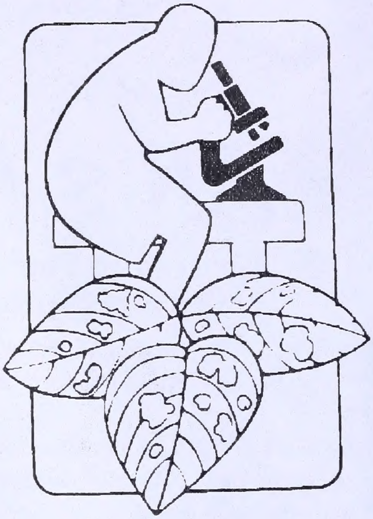
What's Up

Ag. Biotech Multi Media Resource is moving ahead full steam. The script is complete and the art work has been initiated for the video development. A contractor has been retained to develop the facilitators package. Thank you to all the sponsors and reviewers of the project. It is on schedual and the funding is nearly all in place. Biotech and science in our food supply are enormous and compelling topics. Biotech and science will be the major theme for all Ag in the Classroom activity in the next year.

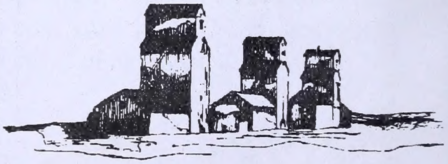


The ***1995 Summer Agricultural Education Institute*** will be hosted by Lethbridge Community College, July 16 - 23. We are pleased the Network is planning their Annual Meeting to coincide with our dates. Biotech will be a feature of this year's Institute. The Lethbridge Research Station, thanks to Dr. Larry Kawchuk, will provide hands-on biotech lab experience for the participants this summer. Speaking of participants, we are pleased to welcome our out of province guests from British Columbia, Saskatchewan, Manitoba, Ontario and Australia.

The time has come to start updating our ***Resource Listing***. Network members will be contacted for any changes. The demand for Ag. in the Classroom resources has quadroupled from last year. It seems the resource listing works. **Thanks to UGG** for sponsoring the printing of our resources so we can provide the materials to the schools at no cost. Most appreciated in these times of cutting back.



Ag in the Classroom has had a busy season with the highlight being the ***Western Agriculture Awareness Council*** Annual Meeting in Winnipeg in February. This new organization will help facilitate sharing and cooperative resource development amongst the western provinces. Alberta will be the host of the 1996 meeting so there will be an opportunity for all ag. awareness groups to share in this organization.



Busy Hands Busy Minds

The Ag. Ambassador Network now boasts 1400 teachers representing more than 1000 Alberta schools. Stettler did a fantastic job hosting those schools and their talented youth at the ***1995 Ag Ambassador Fair*** on April 12. The organizers are a real enthusiastic crew with ideas to spare! Hundreds of people joined the festivities. Some of the highlights were the CFCW live broadcast, industry activity displays, stock dogs, a family supper, a kiss the cow competition and of course the student exhibits. Alex Graham, Alberta Pool, presented the High Point Awards. *Thanks to Alberta Pool for making this program THE BEST!*

UFA Co-op has committed to another two years funding of the Summer Institute. This makes them our Co-Venture Partner with the University of Lethbridge, the Hosting Ag Colleges and Ag in the Classroom for eight years and total of **$140,000! What a vision ... What a partner!** Thank you to UFA, U of L, the colleges and all of our community and industry sponsors.

Spring is sprung, the grass is riz, what the heck can I do with these kids?

If you're reaching the bottom of your bag of tricks or are just looking for a way to take advantage of the fresh spring weather look no further. AITC has a hundred and one ideas for outdoor lessons.

For example:

Division I
Grow a Snack - Agriculture and Me Plus handbook, Lesson 4
Students plant and grow seeds of various vegetables then record the time it takes to produce a crop.

Division II
Take a Walk on the Weed Side - SAEI 1991 handbook, Lesson 9
Students collect weed samples in the vicinity of the school on a "weed walk." Then they study plant adaptations before growing weeds in the classroom with different variables.

Division III
Food Safety Issues - SAEI 1991 handbook, Lesson 29
Students design and construct a 6 foot tall functional scarecrow for use in a garden plot on a farm, acreage, or city garden. Students come up with appropriate names for their creations.

They're Heeeeere!

Ready This Fall!

Get your hands on the **Brand New 1992 SAEI Handbook!** Hot off the presses, these lesson plans are the newest addition to the AITC resources and are available to anyone who calls or writes to ask for one. There are another 29 lessons to try out. And hey, there's one that's *perfect* for you.

Looking some diversity?

AITC has worked hard to provide you with leading edge, top o' the line agriculture diversity lesson plans.

You remember ag diversity. You know, the information everyone's talking about but no one has anything on. Yep, that's the one. They're here. The plans are as ready for you as you are for them. Contact AITC for more information.

FAIR - Cont..from page one

Science of agriculture

Some entries have also been submitted to science fairs.

"It's a good crossover. Agriculture is science," Gabert said.

This year's show held here April 12 featured seed displays arranged in a picture, scientific studies on how plants grow or how fertilizer works, among other.

Groups promoting certain commodities were on hand with displays on bison ranching, canola, dogs herding ducks and exotic fibres. A table covered with pelts drew squeals of repugnance from some when they realized they'd picked up a skunk fur.

Judges award points for humor, visually pleasing entries, good research efforts, imagination and initiative by the students.

"We expect to see written communication, highly visual, accurate work," said Gabert.

Next year's fair will likely be held in Stettler with plans to offer a second fair, perhaps in the northern regions of the province.

The Agriculture Ambassador Program is made up of Alberta teachers who have volunteered to distribute agricultural education information to other teachers and students. This year, about 1,400 teachers in 1,000 schools are part of the ambassador program sponsored by the government and Alberta Wheat Pool.

Article reprinted with permission from the Western Producer.

Editors note: *In addition to showcasing student ideas and efforts the Fair contributed generously to the Heartland Youth Centre and the Stettler District 4-H Scholarship Fund through the Kiss a Cow Competition and the 4-H hosted banquet.*

The contributions of the participating teachers representing more than 50 Alberta schools were tremendous. Thank you.

Marilyn Potter of Stettler Elementary, take a BOW for your excellence in the role of Ag. Ambassador!!

A look at the future: *Next year the Fair will be held again in Stettler and will feature some new attractions and a school tour orientation for teachers so they can design their own educational experiences.*

Look for the '96 Prize List in the Fall newsletter.

Letter from Rosary School Received by AITC - May 2, 1995

April 24, 1995

Agriculture in the Classroom
ATTENTION: Betty Gabert

I am writing to thank you very much for the Agriculture in the Classroom curriculum materials that you sent me. I distributed them to our school. I also made the suggestion to the staff, and the Parent Advisory Council, that we have an Agricultural Fair at our school. Everyone agreed it would be great to give it a try. The Agricultural Fair replaced the Science Fair, and was held April 4, 1995.

The students provided forty-two displays for the Agricultural Fair, and I was able to add ten commercial displays, to add a little more diversity. For added entertainment the grade one class preformed a farm safety rap song, and also featured, were homesteading skits, agricultural commercials and testimonials, a roping demonstration, and competition, and many door prizes. The students displays were very innovative. Some displays included such things as noodle making, bread baked in a bread machine, video of a cow calving, ice cream samples made with ice cream machine, cheese samples, baked potato strips; many of these items were used for viewers to sample. I must also thank you for helping me come up with the idea for the Agricultural Fair. It was after learning of the ag. fair in southern Alberta that I thought we could do something similar in our community-only on a smaller scale. The curriculum materials you sent were very helpful in developing display ideas, and for teachers to (hopefully), further their agricultural teaching, on an ongoing basis.

Our Agricultural Fair was truly met with enthusiasm, and overwhelming support, and was an entertaining, and educational experience for all those people involved; both rural and urban!!

I themed the fair "COME TOGETHER", stressing the coming together of 1) urban with rural 2) producers (ie. cattle, pork, chicken etc.) with bankers, accountants, grocery store workers 3) staff and students with parents and community volunteers. The theme was effective, as all these people did come together with a very positive feeling about Agriculture.

Thanks very much again, for all your assistance.
Sincerely,
Sherry Dechant, Rosary School
Agricultural Fair Co-ordinator

PRAIRIE SPACES: A Northern Fescue Prairie Restoration Project

What is Prairie? Prairie means an area dominated by native grassland. Native refers to plants that existed prior to settlement, and were not introduced from other countries.

Alberta Agriculture, Food and Rural Development's Public Lands Branch works to maintain prairie and to find ways of restoring disturbed native prairie to its original condition. Most of the remaining northern fescue prairie is found on public land in east-central Alberta. In the fall of 1994 and spring of 1995, students from Vernon Barford Junior High School in Edmonton broadcasted at this location, a seed mix of 10 different native grasses and 14 types of wild flowers collected from fescue prairie. Bedding plants of some native grasses and wild flowers were added on a portion of the area. Prairie rose and snowberry shrubs were also plants.

This fescue prairie restoration plot was established with the following objectives:

1. To promote public awareness of the value and importance of prairie ecosystems.
2. To encourage conservation and responsible use of native prairie.
3. To further knowledge about prairie restoration.
4. To encourage the use of native plants.

Are there different types of prairie?

1. **Tallgrass prairie:** Only remnants (less than 1 per cent) remain of the prairie that prior to settlement covered much of the richer soils in southern Manitoba. Efforts are being made to collect seed from these remnants and restore small areas in Manitoba to tall grass prairie.
2. **Mixed grass prairie:** This grassland is found in drier, southern areas of Alberta, Saskatchewan and Manitoba. Because of the arid climate, less of the mixed grass prairie has been cultivated. About 24 per cent remains, mostly under government ownership.
3. **Fescue prairie:** This prairie is found on better soils in Alberta and Saskatchewan. It has been divided into the foothills fescue prairie and the northern fescue prairie. The northern fescue prairie stretched in a band across the central portion of these two provinces. About 20 per cent of the foothill fescue prairie remains, but only 5 per cent of the original northern fescue prairie is left. This prairie type was originally found around Edmonton.

What did the settler think of the prairie?

Settlers coming from Europe brought with them the idea that land must be cultivated, planted and nurtured in some fashion to be valuable.

The settlers were terrified of the prairie fires that swept the Canadian prairies. Settlers didn't understand why the Aboriginal people burned the prairie. The settler often thought that if the Aboriginal people stopped burning the more "fertile" forest would cover the landscape. The settler did not realize that it was the grassland, and not the forest that created fertile soil, and that it was mainly climate that created the prairies.

What is the remaining prairie used for?

The primary use of the prairie today is for grazing of domestic cattle. Secondary uses include oil and gas exploration and extraction, hunting and recreation. Some think the remaining prairie should be set aside and preserved without use because there is so little left.

However, it has been shown that if a fescue prairie is not grazed or burned, so much dead grass builds up that it chokes out the living grasses, leaving weeds, shrubs or trees to take over.

Why is it important to conserve prairie?

Native grassland communities have a wide variety of organisms, processes, and communities, which is known as biodiversity. Biodiversity is important for the following reasons:

1. Moral or ethical reasons: We have an obligation to protect our fellow creatures. The rate of extinction is high.
2. Aesthetics: The diversity that we find in native landscapes adds interest, value and quality to our lives.
3. Economics: Natural or native communities throughout the world provide direct benefits to man in the form of food, medicine, buildings and industrial products.
4. Services: Natural communities, including prairies, are also important for maintaining fertility and formation of soils, cycling nutrients, natural control of harmful organisms, climate and atmospheric influences.

Cont....page 6

Prairie Spaces cont...from page 5

What can we do to help?

1. We can identify, conserve and properly manage the prairie that we have left.
2. We can learn to reclaim and reclaim different prairie types. This is important so that we can advise companies following industrial development.
3. We can emphasize the importance of species diversity and create interest by planting "prairie spaces" in our schoolyards and gardens.

How do you create a "prairie space"?

1. The chosen site must be well prepared before seeding. If the area has been seeded to tame grasses, the sod must be dug up and the site tilled at least three times prior to seeding. The seed bed should be firm.
2. A seed mix containing approximately 70 per cent local native grasses and 30 per cent local native flowers can be broadcast by hand in either the spring or the late fall. It is suggested that the site be rolled or raked afterward to ensure soil to seed contact.
3. The area has to be hand-weeded. Expect a very lush growth of weeds in the first year.
4. You are unlikely to see any flowering of native plants until the second or third year, since these are long-lived perennials plants. Some of the seed may not germinate for several years.

There is a growing need to learn the science and art of restoring our prairies. Our children need to understand the value of maintaining species diversity, and lean about prairie ecology in a practical, hands on way. This can be done by recreating prairie spaces in our parks and schoolyards.

Heather Gerling from Public Lands Management Branch is looking for three schools in the central Alberta area interested in creating a prairie space in their schoolyard. She has a slide presentation and prairie activity that can help to raise student awareness and interest. She can also help with obtaining seed and provide more information about how to prepare and manage your prairie space.

More information on creating prairie spaces may be obtained from:
Alberta Agriculture, Food & Rural Development
Public Lands
Industrial Land Services
200, J.G. O'Donoghue Building
7000 - 113 Street
EDMONTON, AB T6H 5T6
Telephone: (403) 427-3932
FAX: (403) 422-4244

Sponsors: Renaissance Energy Ltd..
Pinnacle Resources.

Plant materials Supplied By:
Enviroscapes
Eagle Lake Nurseries

National Library of Canada
Bibliothèque nationale du Canada
3 3286 50697 2831

Pizza Pizzaz

York Region, Ontario Agriculture in the Classroom

If you ask your students what their favorite food is, the answer will probably be pizza. Thick or thin, round or square, pizza comes in an endless variety of sizes and tastes.

Pizza Pizzaz is a series of lessons focussing on the four food groups and the role agriculture plays in producing our food. Pizza is a popular food representing the four food groups. That makes it a perfect theme for these lessons.

Grains are ground into flour for the crust. Cows produce milk for the cheese. Vegetables and fruits are used for toppings and livestock are used for pepperoni, salami, ham, bacon and sausage.

This is only a sample of the Pizza Pizzaz lesson plans, for more information and other lesson suggestions, contact AITC.

What's a Mushato?

Grocery stores have started selling broccoflowers. A broccoflower is part broccoli and part cauliflower. Can you invent a new topping for pizza?

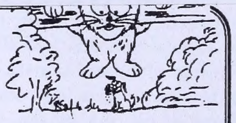
Invent a new topping for pizza by combining 2 or 3 regular toppings. (e.g. a mushato - a mushroom with a tomato top)

Create an advertisement promoting your new ingredient. Highlight what will attract people to your new topping. Include an illustration and description of your new ingredient.

Background on Biotech

For thousands of years, humans have been selecting, sowing and harvesting seeds that produce food products. Though they didn't understand the underlying scientific principle involved - namely, that they were moving and modifying genes by the thousands - early farmers, ranchers, bakers, brewers and vintners have been harnessing biology for centuries to make and modify their plants and food products. Modern biotechnology allows food producers to do the same thing - knowingly and with deliberate purpose.

Hangin' In



✖ All things being equal, tall people use more soap.

Anonymous

✖ Don't wear a belt and suspenders. People will think you're paranoid.

Forrest Gump